FBI LAB [redacted] EXAMINATION OF ALBA'S MAGAZINES

Paul L. Hoch
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TENTATIVE CONCLUSION: The June 1963 issue of the American Rifleman found in Alba's N.O. garage, where Oswald used to hang out, had his thumbprint, and a coupon torn from a Klein's ad on page 59. Once it was established that Oswald had ordered his rifle from the February issue, interest in the June issue apparently disappeared, although he may have used it to order ammo and a clip.

These notes are disorganized and fragmentary; I just wanted to put down everything that came to my mind on this rather confusing problem. Comments are welcomed. Initial distribution: SM, HW, GRS, MEF, JNS, RB.

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The circumstances under which FBI SA Lester G. Davis obtained seven magazines from Adrian Alba is discussed in detail separately. Here we concentrate on the FBI lab exams.

CD 75, p. 455 indicates that Davis sent the mags to the lab on 11/23, asking that they be checked for prints of Oswald and for indented writing. Davis also asked for a comparison of "the portion of page 59 where an order blank had been torn" from a Klein's ad. He doesn't say what it should be compared with, but he describes it as "an order blank believe to have been mailed by suspect OSWALD...." He does not say which of the seven magazines has the ad on page 59 - unusually careless, even for the FBI. I [redacted] am sure it is June 1963, the only one of the seven with a Klein's ad on page 59, with the possible exception of one I have not been able to find. Presumably at this time Davis knew that a mail-order to Klein's was involved, but had not heard that the order from the Feb. 1963 issue of American Rifleman had been identified.

When the FBI replied on 11/29, they reported that a right thumb print had been found on page 37 of the June issue. No mention is made of the torn-out order blank. (CD 75, p. 456)

This report of the lab exam is also unusually vague, not referring to the items examined by number ("Q" or "C" or the like). If the magazines were given an FBI exhibit number, they should be in the Archives, but a hasty check of the Federal Register list turned up no mention of them. (Possible exception: D85*, "Two magazine ads on 'Klein's Sporting Goods'." Item D15 is "Three magazines," but the absence of a "*" on the FR listing means it was found among Oswald's possessions.)

Also, this page does not mention the other mags provided for examination. There appears to be a more complete description of the results of the examination in the part of CD 7 devoted to that topic. Here are the relevant index listings: CD 7, p. 328: Worker, The; CD 7, p. 329: American Rifleman, The; Field and Stream; Guns and Hunting; Klein's Sporting Goods, Inc. (The magazines listed are just the ones provided by Alba.) Both of these pages are withheld; I suspect because there is material on both of them dealing with the Worker, possibly compromising an FBI informant there. (If there was something really juicy that came out of the FBI examination of these mags, I don't think they would even tell the Commission.) We might be able to talk the FBI into releasing the part of p. 329 relating to the magazines. (Results of two different examinations are frequently reported on the same page.)

CD 7 also includes many pages on the tracing of the rifle. (Section IV.A, pp. 179-222. I don't have any of this; it should be in Lifton's big order. I should at least get pp. 195-205, which are probably the same as the pages in CD 75 which we have discussed. There are references to Alba on pp. 198, 200, 203-4. I have checked only the indexes through CD 75, Sylvia's index, and Vol. 15.)

I don't think the WR mentions Oswald's print on this magazine. Does that mean anything? I doubt it.

WHERE DID ADRIAN ALBA'S MAGAZINES GO?
(or, WHO WAS THAT MASKED STRANGER ANYWAY?)

In his testimony, [redacted] Alba said that "on the coffee table I would say that I had approximately anywhere from 80 to 120 magazines." That's quite a few - for example, 1 to 2 years of 5 monthly magazines - and would require a pretty strong coffee table. So, in the following, keep in mind the possibility that he had considerably fewer. (Ref.: 10H225)

Alba was interviewed by the FBI on 11/23/63. (CE 1933, which is CD 75, pp. 264-266) He "made available his supply of gun magazines which were maintained in the waiting room.... These consist of the following:" The seven issues listed are American Rifleman for June, July, September, October, and November 1963; Guns and Hunting for January 1964; Field and Stream for December 1958.

The FBI may have taken only the gun magazines, although I would not call Field and Stream one. Or, they may have chosen by some other criterion. Logically, one might expect that they took only the most recent issues, or those which Oswald could have seen, but again Field and Stream does not fit.

Consider the possibility that some of the magazines were removed before the FBI could get to them. The Secret Service took two issues of "The Shooters Book of Guns" on 11/22. "On the morning of 11-23-63" an unnamed SS agent, apparently Vial, "called at the garage to interview Mr. Alba. He was not available. He was contacted at his home by telephone and he stated that he remembered Oswald primarily because he, Mr. Alba, is a gun collector and Oswald always expressed interest in guns. In the office of the Crescent City Garage, Mr. Alba keeps a supply of gun magazines.... He gave me permission to take two of the gun magazines...." (From CE 3119, p. 6)

Question: who suggested taking only two?

The magazines taken are apparently "The Shooters Book of Guns" for Sept. 1962 and 1963. (Is this an annual?) The covers only are attachments to this report; also attached is a statement by Alba; presumably given when he called by the SS office on Monday 11/25, as requested. (I will order copies of these items.)

"About 9:00 A.M., November 23, 1963, a lone white male ... came to the office and told (Jesse Patrick) McNEIL, "Im one of ADRIAN's very best friends." and wanted to borrow some sports magazines. McNeil told him to help himself, nothing more was said, and the man stayed for only a couple of minutes. McNeil worked at the garage only on alternate Saturdays, and presumably did not know the habitues. He gave a fairly good description of the visitor (early 20's, short, black hair, medium gray sports coat) - good enough for a comparison with the various SS agents. It seems unlikely that a SS agent would not have properly identified himself, but it is noted that Alba "is well known to this office as the official cars of the Office are stored at the Crescent City Garage." (CE 3119, p. 6. The McNeil interview is CD 75, p. 262)

If the visitor was not a SS agent, it could still have been quite innocent. That might account for the small number of magazines the FBI got. (According to McNeil, the FBI agent came by later.) If the visitor wanted to remove some incriminating material, he did a bad job, since the FBI got a magazine with Oswald's print and a Klein's ad coupon torn out. On the other hand, if the visitor wanted to leave something that would certainly get official attention .... (Far out!)

When Liebeler took Alba's deposition, he may have had some idea that there was something odd going on. He asked if Alba had gone through the magazines, and if he could tell whether the magazines which Oswald had borrowed were still there when the FBI and SS came. Alba seemed confused by this line of questioning (10H225). Apparently he did not remember the mystery visitor. CD [redacted] 75, p. 262 (the McNeil interview) indicated that McNeil discussed the visitor with Alba; it appears that this discussion prompted the FBI interview of McNeil (which was also on 11/23). (I guess McNeil called the FBI, although this is not indicated.) I gather that McNeil and Alba did not consider the possibility that the man was the SS agent who had talked to Alba earlier, or concluded that it was not he; otherwise they would not have brought this to the attention of the FBI. Apparently Alba was not asked if he could identify "one of his very best friends" from McNeil's description. Hmm.

SUMMARY OF VARIOUS KLEIN'S ADS

I checked American Rifleman (AR) for January - December 1963, and Field and Stream (FS) for 12/58. This covers 6 of the 7 magazines given to the FBI by Alba. (The remaining one, Guns and Hunting for Jan. 1964, is not on file in local libraries.)

Kleins had a full-page ad in AR for 1,2,4,6-10 of 1963. There may have been ads in the other issues, but I did not find them, (except for a small ad for their catalog on p. 107 of the November issue).

Each of these ads had the Carcano. The catalog number was C20-T1196 through July; later the "T" was dropped. It is described as 36 inches and 5¾ pounds through February; 40 inches and 7 pounds thereafter. The price was $ 12.88 through June; $ 12.78 thereafter. With the scope, the price was always $ 19.95. All the ads included "E20-(T)751. 6.5 mm Italian military [redacted] ammo with free 6-shot clip, 108 rds. $ 7.50." (The phrasing varied slightly.)

The fact that the price, description, and catalog number varied at different times makes it quite plausible that Oswald was sent the longer model even though he ordered from the February issue. (Cf. Accessories, pp. 48-50,for example.)

The Report did not give a source for the claim that the order blank on Klein's microfilm is from the 2/63 issue of AR (WR 119), but the source presumably was Waldman, who identified it on the basis of the department number on the coupon. (7H367). The hypothesis that this department number could have come from the identical ad placed in another magazine is apparently disproved by the fact that identical ads with different department numbers appear in the Sept. and Oct. 1963 issues of AR. Thus, we can accept the claim that the coupon came from the Feb. 1963 issue.

Here are the pages and department numbers from the Klein's ads in the 1963 issues of AR: Jan., p. 61, # 323; Feb., p. 65, # 358; Apr., p. 55, # 405; June, p. 59, # 425; July, p. 67, # 429; August, p. 79, # 454; Sept., p. 89, # 458; Oct., p. 85, # 478.

I didn't see anything of special interest in the 12/58 FS. I would like to have someone dig up the 1/64 Guns & Hunting, at least to check if there is a Kleins ad on p. 59. If not, the June 1963 issue of AR, with Oswald's print , is definitely the one described as having a coupon removed from a Klein's ad on p. 59, [redacted] although not specified in the pages I have seen relating to the FBI lab exams.

It is noted that the page with the print is the last page of an article starting on p. 35: "Stocking the Shotgun," by Hal Hartley. Nothing special.

The 8 ads described here are not nearly identical, although the relevant item changes only slightly. For example, the August ad has the wrong illustration (no scope). I have copies of Feb., [redacted] April, June, and August, but only a bad negative copy of the June ad.

SPECULATION - WHAT MIGHT OSWALD HAVE ORDERED USING THE JUNE 1963 AD?

The most obvious possibility is the ammo and clip. He is alleged to have shot at Gen. Walker already, but there is no indication a clip would have been used.

Some questions: is the "Italian military ammo" different from the Western ammo used in the assassination? Was the clip that Klein's included the same as that found? (Sylvia points out (p. 119) that the 6-shot clip is less usual than the 5-shot one; see 3H398. Both the advertised and the found clips are 6-shot.) (I don't have the expertise to check these things out.)

Was Klein's ever asked to check for another sale to Oswald? There is no indication in the testimony of Waldman and Scibor that they were. Perhaps no records were kept for sales other than rifles; in any case it would be a long job to check through several months worth of film looking for an order without knowing the date. (It might not be all that unreasonable to look for just those orders from the June 1963 American Rifleman - probably no more than a few thousand of those.) There is no chance at all that we would be allowed to go over these records. Perhaps we should tell the FBI about this and get them to do it??

I don't recall offhand if the FBI ever tried to track down the origin of the clip. They did this for the ammo and even the sling. I don't recall seeing a report on the ammo Klein's sold; we should look for this (especially in the Gemberling and Chicago CD's).

MORE SPECULATION - WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

It is hard to see why the FBI would not have followed this up, even once they knew the ad in question was not used to get the rifle. They certainly were concerned about the source of the ammo, if not the clip.

When the Report came out, it was rather noticeable that the 2/63 ad was not a CE. It has been suggested that this is because of the difference between the rifle ordered and the one sent, but (as discussed above) that is not hard to explain away. Any ideas?

It would have been to the Commission's advantage to establish that Oswald ordered his clip and ammo from Klein's. However, the order blank may have revealed some interesting things. Was the name Hidell used again? What address or P.O. Box? How was payment made? Interesting possibilities.

Sylvia has noted (p. 220) that the FBI should have noticed a rifle and revolver delivered to Oswald's Dallas P.O. Box in March 1963, since they had known since September 1962 that he subscribed to the Worker (17H773). The same argument would apply to anything suspicious sent to the N.O. P.O. Box, since on June 26 the N.O. FBI learned that Oswald had used that box number in a letter to the Worker (17H755), and on July 23 they confirmed that he had rented it (17H754). (I wonder why this box number was not confirmed more promptly?)

CD 75

FD-302 (Rev. 1-25-60)

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date 11/25/63

JESSE PATRICK McNEIL, 4424 South Rocheblave Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, advised he is employed at the Crescent City Garage, 640 Magazine Street, New Orleans, on alternate Saturdays only at which time he relieves the owner, ADRIAN ALBA. He advised a number of magazines are maintained in the lobby of the office for the use of customers. About 9:00 A.M., November 23, 1963, a lone white male in his early 20's, short and of average build, came to the office and told McNEIL, "Im one of ADRIAN's very best friends." and wanted to borrow some sports magazines. McNEIL stated he went back to work at the desk behind the counter which blocks his view of the magazine table, after telling the man to help himself and knows nothing further about what happened. He stated the man did not ask for any particular magazine or any particular type of magazine and only remained in the office at most two minutes and certainly did not have time to search through any number of magazines and asked no questions about them. He stated he did not recognize the man as anyone he has seen in the neighborhood, but emphasized that he is only at the garage every other week and does not know many people in the area.

McNEIL said he had no further conversation with the man and did not detect any accent and could only describe him as wearing a medium gray sports coat and having black hair. He could not recall any further details or description. He said he would not be able to identify this man if he were to see him again.

Mr. McNEIL advised that he knows no one by the name of LEE OSWALD or HIDELL and recalls an FBI Agent making inquiry about OSWALD on November 23, 1963, but the man he had just mentioned above had visited the garage prior to this interview and he did not attach any significance to it until he had had an occasion to discuss it with ADRIAN.

On 11/23/63 at New Orleans, Louisiana File # NO 89-69

Special Agents REED W. JENSEN and RAY E. ROCKHOLD/ush

by _____ Date dictated 11/25/63

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CD 75

NO 89-69
LGD:sab

The seven gun magazines furnished by Mr. AARON T. ALBA, Operator of the Crescent City Garage, 618 Magazine Street, as being the magazine possibly read by LEE H. OSWALD, were forwarded to the FBI Laboratory on November 23, 1963. These were forwarded with other material to be examined for any latent fingerprints of OSWALD and for examination as to indented writing. The Laboratory was also requested to compare the portion of page 59 where an order blank had been torn from an advertisement of "Klein's", a sporting goods company in Chicago, Illinois, an order blank believed to have been mailed by suspect OSWALD to this company.

P.455

P.456

CD 75

NO 89-69/dc

On November 29, 1963, the FBI Laboratory advised that an examination of "The American Rifleman" Magazines previously submitted by the New Orleans Office have been conducted.

The Laboratory advised that one latent fingerprint had been developed on page 37 of "The American Rifleman" Magazine for June, 1963 and has been identified as a right thumb impression of LEE HARVEY OSWALD, FBI Number 327925 D.

It is noted that the above magazine had previously been obtained by the New Orleans Office from the Crescent City Garage which was frequented by OSWALD.